

Metal That Defies the Melting Pot

What the Government Officially Thinks of Some of the Immigrants:

THE non-British aliens who obtain visas consist chiefly of Poles and Polish Jews, who have large families, and generally are engaged in the garment trade. They are an undesirable class of immigrant, as they live almost entirely in large cities, particularly New York.

It is estimated that persons waiting for visas at the present time will be in excess of 400 per diem. At least 350,000 Polish Jews and Poles are preparing to proceed to the United States during the current year. Some estimates place the total at 500,000 and 1,000,000 as the number of persons who may emigrate. This is due to filtration of persons from the newly acquired territory of Poland.

Restriction of emigration from Poland is highly desirable because of the unassimilable character of the large majority of the emigrants and because of the immediate danger of their carrying contagious diseases now prevailing in that country.

Excerpts from an official Department of State report, dated December 11, 1920, submitted at the request of Representative Albert Johnson, chairman, Committee on Immigration, House of Representatives.

THE discomforts the immigrants were suffering at overcrowded Ellis Island rather than the perils they brought the nation were the inspirations of the attention first directed toward the incoming hordes last summer. But attention once directed toward the Ellis Island situation could not fail to focus on the undesirability of the quality of the immigrants.

The New York port's accommodations were taxed to the limit in handling immigration as early as last June. Since then, instead of decreasing, the immigration tide has increased. In July, 83,959 persons were admitted to the country. In August, immigrants totaled 86,500. In September the total was approximately 98,400. In October the 100,000 mark was passed.

How extensive is the immigration likely to become? is the natural inquiry.

The answer was best stated in the report of the House Immigration Committee filed with the proposed bill for drastically limiting the tide of incomers. So alarming did the great majority of the committee view the present situation that they reported the proposed bill favorably on the opening day of the short session of Congress and asked the House to limit debate to four hours and pass it immediately.

If there were in existence a ship that could hold 3,000,000 human beings, the 3,000,000 Jews of Poland would board it to escape to America.

The committee's report on the Jewish situation shows their comprehension that the immigration problem is one of races rather than numbers. The class legislation inhibition in American law, however, prevents exclusion of the undesirables from the racial standpoint, so the committee was obliged to go to the length of urging almost total exclusion of all immigrants. But of the matter of remedies for immigration evils, discussion will be had later.

In the House Committee's report, attention is paid to the volume and class of immigrants coming into the country. It is pointed out that all countries contribute to the flood, but that Jews form a majority of the newcomers.

These conclusions agree with the information offered by Ellis Island officials and variously presented by observers during recent months.

Statistics of the Immigration Department at Washington for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1920, show that the net increase in foreign-born population was approximately 200,000, of which about 16,000 were listed as Hebrews. This discrepancy from statements regarding the Jewish rush of immigrants is due to two facts, first that many Jews were listed under the names of other nationalities and second, that the big rush from Danzig and other Jewish centers began this summer, at the close of the fiscal year.

The Ellis Island immigrants include a few from the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries, even fewer from France and Holland, and practically none from Russia. Spaniards and Portuguese are fairly numerous, but until comparatively recently emigration to the countries of Southeastern Europe more than counterbalanced immigration from those lands.

Outside of relatively insignificant numbers of immigrants from small nations, this cataloging leaves to consider:

Jewish immigration
Central European immigration
Italian immigration.

In theory, immigration is forbidden from Germany and Austria, as it is impossible from isolated Russia. In fact, however, vast numbers of immigrants are

coming into the country who until they left for this land had never been on soil other than that which belonged to the German and Austro-Hungarian empires prior to the armistice.

There is perhaps a little grim humor in this fact that we exclude immigrants from countries with which we are still theoretically at war, while we welcome freely un-warlike immigrants from the same lands.

Persons who visit Ellis Island comment with surprise on the fact that German is the language they hear most frequently. The explanation is simple. The partitioning by the Peace Conference of the Central Empires placed many sections under new governments. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and several other new nations sprang up. From these lands come Jews who speak only German or Hungarian. While our government has not ratified and recognized the Versailles Treaty as making a peace with the Central Empires, still we treat as nations the governments that treaty set up and are therefore able to admit immigrants from them.

Poland is the country which furnishes the largest proportion of immigrants. They are with few exceptions Jews. Some, it is true, have always lived in parts of the German Empire which still remain under control of the German Republic, but with ready consciences they have been able to tell the American consuls at the port of embarkation that they are Poles, Czechs, Slovenes, or what not.

Thus it is that the country is filling up with thousands of German-speaking Jews, while millions of Teutons of the same stock that forms a large part of the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic-Teuton backbone of the country, are excluded.

Frederick A. Wallis, immigration commissioner, recently announced that several millions of Germans were eager to come into this country as soon as peace was concluded. Their scruples which forbid them to claim a nationality other than their own seem to bar their entrance, however, while their Jewish next-door neighbors continue to come in droves.

Poland is the place from which the great proportion of immigration is coming. Warsaw is the center of the movement. Danzig is the port of embarkation.

A few years before the war, Poles furnished a large percentage of the immigration. Immigration of persons of Polish extraction is light now, although government statistics hereafter will probably indicate the contrary. Many of the Jews call themselves Poles, the continuance by the Polish Government of a large standing army is a cause of the comparative smallness of Polish immigration.

Jews are taking advantage of the state of war with Germany and Austria, the Russian isolation, and the large standing armies in Poland and other countries, to occupy every bit of available space on the ocean liners bound for America.

"There are 250,000 Jews in Warsaw, determined to get into the United States," said Ole Hansen, former mayor of Seattle who returned a few weeks ago from an investigation in Europe. The House Committee's estimate of three millions followed early in December.

Italian immigration, next to the Jewish, is the largest with which the authorities have to deal. It is not the same quality as that of the Jews but it, too, presents a problem.

Officials at Ellis Island say that the Jews entering the country are with rare exceptions of a very low type. Dispatches which have seeped into the country from Warsaw indicate that the Poles believe the emigration to America is gradually ridding their country of the worst type of Jew, however bad some of those remaining may be.

The Italian immigration, as distin-

guished from the Jewish, is viewed by the immigration officers as largely productive. The incoming Jew who will add productive impulse to the country is the rarity; the incoming Italian who will not is the rarity. That refers to the present status. It is reported that 3,000,000 Italians are awaiting opportunities to come to this country. It may well be that in that great number there will be many undesirables.

At present, however, the Italians returning consist of Italian reservists, whose character may be judged by the fact that they returned voluntarily to their country on the outbreak of the war. In addition there are the wives and children of Italians now in the country. These latter are, of course, for the time being burdens on the productivity of the country. But it is assumed that the children growing up under American institutions may be expected to become good citizens.

But there is a problem presented by the Italian immigrant—perhaps it would be better to say the Sicilian, Neapolitan, or Calabrian immigrant. From these districts there have come the banditti who have terrorized the foreign sections of New Orleans, Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Detroit and other cities in years back.

They furnish the "sawed-off shotgun" gangs.

Periodical outbreaks of these warring elements, call them the Mafia, the black hand, or what you will, have resulted from trade jealousies and blackmail operations. Police in the cities in which epidemics of killings have occurred have without notable exception been powerless to check the feudist murders.

The exclusion of these professional outlaws who live by a code of their own and in defiance of American law is a matter of selection and investigation. Immigration laws give the authorities power to exclude known criminals, but the necessity of proof makes the law practically worthless.

The Jew immigration problem, therefore, is viewed by the Ellis Island authorities as a racial exclusion problem; the Italian exclusion problem is considered a matter of individual investigation and selection. Immigration officers have long cherished the suspicion that European police forces have encouraged and aided their criminal classes to come to the United States.

American law provides no means of investigation of the character of immigrants except such as can be made by inquiry at the port of entry. American consuls, rushed with demands for passports, can only see that the formal printed questions on the application blanks are asked; they have no way of checking up each applicant's record in the community from which he comes. The viséing of passports is therefore little more than a formality. Some countries have regular investigation agencies working in countries from which immigration comes, and each applicant's record is closely scrutinized before he is allowed to sail.

One other matter should be considered before the question of the remedy for the immigration evil is considered. This is the ability of the agencies the United States possesses to cope with the great tide of newcomers.

Newspaper articles for several months have pointed out the inadequacy of Ellis Island facilities to care for the great numbers of steerage passengers who enter the country.

There is no question of the truth of these articles. Solutions to the problem have been largely confined to suggestions of the establishment of more immigration stations and the enlarging of the inspecting force.

At Ellis Island, however, from the overworked officials who are on the job from early morning until late at night there is another suggestion voiced with unanimity. It is:

"Cut down the immigration."

The Ellis Island inspectors are experienced, and in most cases able men who have retained their jobs at rather low scales of pay because of real interest in the work they are carrying on. Their ability to perform the work has been unquestioned.

They are a rather despondent lot just at present, partially because of overwork, but more largely because of the futility of much of their work.

Applicants for admission to the United States pass rigid medical and physical tests and are then examined as to their mentality under the literacy law. Immigration inspectors working sincerely have been lenient in their requirements. But they have felt that their duty called for the exclusion of undesirables. They have so recommended.

But in seven out of ten cases, the persons whom the immigration board asked be kept out of the country as menaces appeals to the Secretary of Labor have overruled the board. Last year only 2,777 immigrants were rejected finally and only 111 of these failed because of the literacy test.

Appeals to sympathy, political pleas and other reasons of similar nature, have contributed to the action of the appeal official in admitting the all too few thousands the local Ellis Island board ruled were unfit to associate with American citizens.

The matter of proposed remedies and the possibility of effectuating them will be taken up in the third and last article of this series.



"TYPES"

